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ABSTRACT

The working paper describes how a social scientist might go about locating resources for any particular study. Researchers are directed to non-Caribbean based material in European Archives as well as collections in the United States. Caribbean resources are analyzed by county. The countries include Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Netherlands Antilles, Surinam, and French Antilles. (MM)

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Library and Archival Resources for Social Science Research in the Spanish, French, Dutch Caribbean

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Library and Archival Resources for Social Science
Research in the Spanish, French, Dutch Caribbean

Confronted by this formidible assignment a more modest and intelligent person than myself would have politely demurred with the suggestion that another victim be located. Indeed the task as outlined for just the islands and the Guianas is sufficient to exhaust the energy of a team of investigators. To add to this group of polities the advanced and developed nations of Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela and then to be topped off by nothing less than Central America is to approach the euphoric level where all touch with reality is out of the question.

In such circumstances one is reduced to admitting that the task can not be done with the time and facilities available to one person. However, since I foolishly accepted the assignment I will proceed to make clear that my effort is purely an eclectic one taking full advantage of solid work already carried out by more modest and through researchers than I pretend to be. These authorities will be given full credit for their labors in each area. Any observations which may be added will be done in an effort to add new material or personal observations which in no way are meant to detract from the impressive work of compilation.

One final caveat might be registered. I am not sure that I fully understand why the social scientist has been asked to prepare this report. In reality the social scientist who under takes a research project in a new or even familiar field goes directly to the librarian for his initial orientation. You are the experts in resources (non-financial ones) of research. You are going to be able to add much more to my report from your own experience

and knowledge than I am going to be able to divulge to any of you either individually or collectively. Thus I consider this report more a mere working paper whose value will only be adequately measured after all of you have made substantial contributions to it.

Since I have recognized that you are the authorities and since I have made it very clear that this paper can not pretend to be neither authoritative nor complete the most I can honestly do is to describe how a social scientist might go about locating the resources for any particular study.

One basic problem which applies with varying degrees of importance to all of the areas under study is the geographic location of material. In the Caribbean more than most other regions even in the new world basic resource material for social science research is some times located thousands of miles away from the area to be studied. The percentage of this material located elsewhere is highest in the French islands and lowest in the Spanish speaking independent nations. However, independence is no guarantee of control over national material as the sad case of Haiti demonstrates.

All of you are aware of the special climatilogical conditions which are obtained in the Caribbean region making the care of documents and records exceptionally difficult. In addition to this natural process of deterioration there is the constant threat of destruction by fire, sometimes, like that which destroyed the archives of P.R., of very questionable origen.[1/]

Finally there is sometimes present the human barrier which blocks or frustrates research. With very few minor exceptions throughout the

Caribbean this does not apply to the professional core of librarians and archivists who have proved to be most cooperative. However, for example mention might be made of the library resources of one or two Venezuelan institutions where material supposedly purchased and secured for professional use has been opted with priority by a favored few or even appropriated to enrich private collections. Since I can not substantiate such serious charges from personal observation perhaps the less said the better. However, I can speak from personal experience in Puerto Rico and substantiate my observations from personal experience - should any one care to know the details. Of course, it would be expected that material under private control would be restricted to those securing personal permission for their research.

From these general and somewhat wandering introductory remarks let us turn directly to the problem.

General Resources

For current research in the social sciences the European Archives supply only background interest. Furthermore, since most of these archives are well provided with descriptive studies and even publish catalogues as well as published collections of documents we will pass over this non-Caribbean based material superficially. Having actually carried out research in the archives of Spain, France, and Denmark I feel somewhat qualified to indicate that the researcher is well rewarded by his efforts to consult European depositories. Both in quantity of pertinent material and the professional cooperation provided.

Of course, in Spain the principle archive for the Caribbean is the Archivo de Indias in Seville.[2/] This vast gold mine has undergone impressive improvements in recent years under the dynamic direction of its female director. There are at least a half dozen indexes available to the researcher for orientation.[3/] Of special interest to the Caribbean would be the catalogue of documents of the 9th Section which contains material mostly from the late XVIII and early XIXth Century.[4/]

With the centralization of the Spanish colonial administration in the XVIII and XIX century the archival material of this later period came to be desposited increasingly more in the National Archives of Madrid. In addition, there are manuscripts in the National Library, the Historical Institute of the Navy and the archives of the various ministeries such as Foreign Affairs, Justice and Hacienda.

The importance Archives of Simancas near Valladolid should not be ignored. There exists an ample guide to this collection also.[5/] In addition to these collections mentioned (and the listing could be extended three-fold) which are all governmental archives, Spain contains a number of private archives and collections which the researcher should be aware of. Access may be gained in many instances particularly through letters of introduction. One of the more famous collections relative to the Caribbean is found not far from Seville in the estate of the decendents (the famous red countess) of the Count of Mediasidonia.[6/]

The colonial archives of France are even more centralized than those of Spain and are equally accessible. For the social science researcher

interested in the contemporary period the material in France is indispensable. For more than any other area in the Caribbean the French colonies have been closer bound to the affairs of state of the mother country, thus regionalism or dispersion of government records has not occurred in the French territories although as we shall see later there are still local archives in the islands.

In the National Archives there must be over six hundred cartons containing just the correspondence between government officials and their over seas representatives up to last century.[7/] In addition recent material from the past and present century are located in the Archives of the Ministry of France's Overseas Territories. The fabulous National Library contains an unbelievably rich collection of printed works and private collections which have been donated by such important personalities as Victor Schoelcher and others.

The specialized collections in Paris of the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques and the Centre des Hautes Etudes should not be overlooked. In recent years with the transfer of the space center from northern Africa to Kourrou in French Guiana the French National Space Center will become an important focal point for studies concerning that neglected area of the Caribbean.

In recent years great strides have been made in work in the Dutch Archives pertaining to the Caribbean. Led perhaps by the drive and enthusiasm of the late Johanna Kraal and aided by government backed scientific societies such as Wosuna and Sticua, the rich archival Caribbean

holdings in the Hague and Amsterdam have been put in order, classified, catalogued, and described. Now we will begin to see major studies on the Dutch in the Caribbean; the first of which has already appeared in English by Cornelius Goslinga published by the University of Florida Press. 8/

Two basic guides to Dutch Archival material pertaining to the Caribbean and the New World are available in English. 9/ Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz made available in English a survey of the archival material related to the Netherlands Antilles in an article in De West-Indische Gids in 1954-55. He followed this up with another article in Dutch but with an English summary on the Archival material related to the Dutch colonies of Demararay, Essequebo, and Berbice in De Niuwe West-Indische Gids, 1961.

The more recent and more extensive guide published under the auspices of UNESCO and the International Council on Archives is that of Archivist M. P. H. Roessingh. 10/ In this guide which happily contains an index, material related to the Spanish speaking Caribbean can be located. Finally, as we will have occasion to mention below, the late J. Felhoen Kraal published in English in 1957 in De West Indische Gids 11/ a guide to libraries in both Holland and the Netherlands Antilles which dealt in West Indian history.

For further material related to the Caribbean in European archives can be located through such guides as that prepared by Magnus Morner under the dual auspices mentioned above for the Swedish Archives. This study contains also an abbreviated outline of material found in the Danish Archives. 12/ Also

one might want to consult my article in Caribbean material in less obvious centers of Europe.[13] At least one article to my knowledge has been written as a result of attention to these archives.[14]

For an area such as the Caribbean which has been subject to such extensive and intensive exploitation by governments and business it would be obvious to expect that the United States would provide exceptional collections for research. The obvious centers would be in Washington where the government archives are located and business centers such as New York, New Orleans, or Philadelphia. Furthermore, with Universities both private and public from Berkley on the west coast to the John Carter Brown Library on the east coast holding impressive library collections the material available to the researcher is phenomenal in richness and amount. For the Caribbean one should not neglect the Schonburg Collection in New York City or the Widener Collection in Harvard. The Caribbean holdings of the University of Florida are impressive and Miami is beginning to build up a worthy Cuban collection.

Government material extends from the obvious archives of the Department of State, which each year become more and more restricted, to obscure warehouses such as that in the lower west side of New York City where I recently went in search of the holdings of the Department of Justice regarding Puerto Rico which had been announced as available in a recent bulletin of the American Historical Association. I might add that the files I was looking for (1934-40) were withheld and not available.

Concerning State Department material consulate despatches are available on microfilm for most of the Caribbean.[15] Also available is material on the customs receivership by the U.S. of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.[16] What irritates most researchers with material from State is the delay in releasing the more important documents. For example, will the records on Cuba be available in 1974 onward for the early Castro years? Hardly, Highly sensitive material is rarely available before twenty years and even then there are delays and restrictions.

Caribbean Resources: Analysis by Country

Since we have been speaking of Cuba, it would be appropriate to continue since that Caribbean country presents a singular case and at the same time one about which one can offer very little alternative to independent research. The dispersion of information is highly centralized and access to material carefully screened. Nevertheless, this has not prevent the publication in recent years of very creditable studies by French social scientists and others from the area itself like Dr. Reckford of Jamaica.[17]

The most comprehensive and apparently reliable evaluation of material available to the social scientist from government sources is that published in two successive issues of the Latin American Research Review in 1969 by Carmelo Mesa-Lago of the University of Pittsburgh. Incidently the University of Pittsburgh has recently begun a periodical publication devoted exclusively to studies and information on Cuba. In its latest number there is

a long list of journals and periodicals published in Cuba.[19/] The article in LARR evaluates the Cuba publications for the broad spectrum of the social sciences from agricultural economics to vital statistics. The author has provided the researcher with not only an analysis which includes on going periodicals and other sporadic reports but also touches former publications which have either seased to appear or have merged with other workds. The evaluation may be touched with a heavy dosis of scepticism explained by the fact that the author is an exile from his homeland but this does not detract from the usefulness of the work to a forewarned investigator. The author lists and discusses some fifteen current publications which appear with regularity in Cuba. An equal number or more reports are cited in the footnotes and text of the articles.

My last visit to Cuba was in over ten years ago but even then one could tell that the newly constructed library of the University of Habana would become one of the principal centers for research on Cuba. Of the older collections one recalls the magnificent library of the Sociedad Económica Amigos del País which has since been nationalized along with the private collections of such distinguished Cuban scholars like Fernando Ortiz. On might also keep in mind that the miles of taped interviews carried out by the late Oscar Lewis and his assistants will provide a highly personalized account of life in Cuba under Castro but at the same time a very valuable documentary source for research.

Dominican Republic

An example of the services librarians can preform for the researcher is the invaluable survey of the library facilities of the Dominican Republic prepared by Ligia Hoetink and published jointly with Enid Baa through the Pan-American Union.[20] As you are well aware Mrs. Hoetink lists and briefly describes some forty public and private libraries not including the municipal and circulating libraries which are mentioned but not described.

Professor Howard Wiarda has published a useful guide to materials in the Dominican Republic which could be used for research in political science.[21] In addition to an extensive bibliography of books and articles Wiarda lists about a hundred periodicals and journals, not all of which are published in the Dominican Republic.

Important work in archival research has been carried out by Harmannus Hoetink and Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi both of whose works should provide basic guides to material on the Dominican Republic.

Puerto Rico

Primary sources for social science research in Puerto Rico can be basically located in two places: The Puerto Rican collection of the University of Puerto Rico and the various depositories of governmental archives generally under the administration of the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. General speaking any published material related to Puerto Rico should be available in the Puerto Rican collection. Several areas need strengthening. The collection contains a large amount of pamphlets, journals and occasional periodicals which are as yet unclassified.[21A] Hopefully they could also be

Hopefully they could also be indexed also at a later date but it would be enough to get them prepared and catalogued for use, for now. Also there seems to be an area of weakness in the holdings of local government publications. Perhaps there is a badly defined division of responsibility between the archival division of the Instituto and the Puerto Rican Collection. The later seems to be more at the mercy of benevolent administrators who occasionally send their publications to the colection while the former is defended by a law which requires that all published material be deposited in the archives.

The Institute has published an excellent guide to municipal and parrochial archives located through out the island prepared by Father Lino Canedo Gómez. 22/ There is also a guide to help the researcher locate material in the Institute's archival division. 23/ In fact, from personal experience and those experiences of colleagues one is struck by the lack of cooperation and the unwillingness of the personnel to be of service to legitimate investigators. Until recently this adverse condition has been plagued also by problems of space and adequate warehouse facilities. These latter deficiencies have always been singled out as the basic reasons why archival material has not been returned to the island from Washington. Again speaking from personal experience it is infinitely easier to locate and use Puerto Rican archival material in Washington than in San Juan. When and if material is transferred let us hope that it will not run the same fate as the archival material once lodged in the Fortaleza which once transferred to the control of the Institute no longer became available to researchers.

Another project which if ever correctly and adequately terminated would be of great use to the social scientists is that of the index of material in the social sciences related to Puerto Rico. This project started over fifteen years ago and sporadically worked upon by at least a half-dozen investigators is still a long way from completion. Estimates place the number of entries at perhaps over 150, 000 items. The first volume which covers the period up to 1954 is ready for printing but as yet no money is available to publish the mammoth work which would contain over a thousand pages. The second volume from 1954 to 1960 is less complete and much work still to be done before it could be ready for publication, however, at this point no one is even assigned to the task of completion.

The Caribbean Regional Library contains one of the richest collections in existence on the area which interests us. The collection was initiated by Dr. Eric Williams, the distinguished Caribbean historian. Upon its transfer from Trinidad to San Juan and the change in control from the Caribbean Commission to the Caribbean Organization the collection continued to grow under the professional care of Miss Enid Baa. When the Caribbean Organization folded and was replaced by the Caribbean Economic Development Corporation the library began to have a more independent existence converting itself in to the Regional Library of the Caribbean. It is from this time on that one begins to note the decline in professional attention and the effect of a continuing reduction of financial support which is reflected in the lack

of space and the absence of any supporting professional assistance to help the professional librarian, and even worse the lack of funds to purchase a number of publications which previously had been donated by the member governments. More recently some problems have been solved but others have been created. Above all, now the Library has a highly prepared and very knowledge person in charge but in spite of the promises to her funds for subordinate personnel of a professional caliber have not been provided nor is there money to increase the adquisitions of the library. Infinitely worse than this is the forthcoming transfer to a new location. A new and modernly equipped building is being abandoned for a larger but antiquated building located near the damaging salt breezes of the sea. The structure has not been designed for air-conditioning and the over-all effect on library resources will be very detrimental.

One can argue that once the problems have been indentified and there is a desire to correct them that eventually the conditions will improve but there is more fundamental problem which puts in jeopardy the usefulness of the Regional Library to the Caribbean area and this is the political orientation of the new created administrative unit which has the library under its direct control. This badly conceived and misleadingly named North-South Center brings again into the Caribbean affairs the heavy imperial hand of the United States which originally, under different circumstances and other times, had set up the Caribbean Commission which was clearly an organization designed to control colonial communities. To see the effect of this influence

which unfortunately will grow in the coming years upon the Library today one need only compare superficially the titles of the more than a thousand newspapers, journals, or pamphlets which have had to be discarded from the collection or have no longer been received by the Library with the new adquisitions which are arriving at the Library daily. In one group one finds the titles of material from and about the Caribbean region directly and in the other one finds titles of works in English published in the U.S. related to material which has very little to do with the Caribbean and much more to do with the U.S. relations in latin america.

Netherlands Antilles

As indicated above Dr. Johana Felhoen Kraal has described sometime ago in the De West Indische Gids (1956) the important libraries in the Dutch speaking areas of the Caribbean.[24/] Since that time the basic structure of of library facilities in this area has not changed although new personnel are now in charge and some new research aid material is available.

In Curacao the Eilandelijke Bibliotheek continues to offer researchers material of a contemporary and more popular nature. The Wetenschappelijke Bibliotheek continues to be the principal research library. At one time mimeographed catalogues were available in the areas of philosophy, law, economics, and social sciences. I have never seen these catalogues and do not know whether they have been kept up to date. In Aruba the well-known Jan Hartog has continued to improvee the holdings of the municipal library of that island.

Valuable material has also been retained by the religious organizations

in the islands. The library of the Bishop's see and the mission of St. Thomas College contain archival material relative to the island and the activity of the Roman Catholic Church.

Dr. I. S. Emmanuel, who once served as rabbi on Curacao, has published two excellent historical studies both based on the archives of the Jewish community in Curacao. The inestimable value of these collection can be appreciated from the impressive works of Emmanuel.[25/]

There is some indication also that the archival material of the Protestant Reform Church is also considerable but as yet no use has been made of it. In every case of these religious records there is the problem of gaining the confidence of the groups in charge so that an independent research might make free use of the material he finds. As yet this has not been possible.

Another important and private source of archival material is the rich collection of papers and documents related to the 12 plantations secured by the Curacao Petroleum Industries Maatschppij. Dr. Felhoen Kraal in an appendix to her article gives a complete listing of these documents. Here it would appear that a bono fide researcher would be allowed to examine and use the material retained and guarded by the company.

The collection of material which gives most promise of fruitful work at least for the historian is the Landsarchief where government records since at least 1845 and even before in some case are kept. Mr. Alejandro de Paula was in charge of this archive which has now been granted adequate space and

facilities. The monumental task will be to put the material in order and at the easy access of the researcher through guides and descriptions of the holdings which first must be analyzed and processed. This work was being carried out when I visited the Landsarchief three years ago. At least now this archive is in the hands of a competent person who appreciates the value of the collection and the importance of the work he is carry out.

Surinam

The libraries and archival collections of Surinam are lacking in care and attention. Two important libraries, the law library and the library of the agricultural experimental station contain important printed material for researchers. The state of the public library was deficient in the extreme at the time of Dr. Kraal's study. There is no indication that the situation has been greatly improved. Unfortunately much of the damage done is irreparable since valuable material has disappeared. Doubly lamentable is this since apparently copies of important historical material do not even exist in Holland.

The Surinam Museum preserves material of historical value including maps of the territory and records of the Vossenburg plantation. Recently also the government has restored the historic fort which once guarded the entrance to Paramaribo.

The Landsarchief contains archival material from 1845 onward. I can not speak from first hand knowledge of this collection since in spite of my many visits to Paramaribo I have not seen the Landsarchief collection. Finally there however, a recent researcher in Paramaribo, Professor

Drew [14] has written that he has had little or no problem in carrying out research based on census reports retained by the government. Finally there is the library of the Cultural Centrum Suriname established in 1947.

The French Antilles

Although most of the archival material for historical research concerning the French Antilles is found in Paris there are some centers which might be profitably consulted in the islands. In Martinique the pictures that Schoelcher Library located on the central square of Fort de France is primarily a public library but nevertheless contains an impressive collection of valuable books which may be consulted with special permission. A new annex for the library is nearing completion and will more adequately house the collection.

The Departmental Archive contains the most extensive collection of government records and documents. Most of the material is of recent vintage since little prior to 1950 has been collected there. There is some problem of access since the Archive also retains a body of its material in the town of Marin some distance away from Fort de France.[25]

The island of Guadeloupe also contains a Departmental Archive. Some use of this collection has been made by professor Adelaide in the preparation of his recent historical studies.

In both islands the libraries of the Institut Henry Vizioz are important centers for research. In Martinique the concentrations available for advanced study and research are law and economics and in Guadeloupe history and

linguistics are emphasized. The Canadian university has also set up a center for research on a reconstructed sugar plantation on the northeast coast of Martinique. Worthy of praise and of great usefulness to the researcher is the extensive bibliography prepared by the Regional Center for Research in the French Antilles and Guiana.[26] The finished work contains some 4,000 entries. It would be comendable if the work could be expanded to include Guadeloupe and Guiana. Recently the New York Public Library has published a check list of basic books on the French islands.[27]

NOTES

(1) Unsigned typed memorandum entitled "Old Spanish Archives" for Governor Winship dated August 14, 1936. Carbon copy in possession of author.

(2) José María de la Peña y Cámara, Archivo General de Indias de Sevilla. Sevilla, 1958.

(3) Ibid. There is a list of guides to the Archivo de Indias published from 1884 to 1947. p. 149-150.

(4) Catálogo de Documentos de la Sección Novena. Sevilla: 1949. Tomo I pp.822

(5) Guía del Archivo General de Simancas Dirección General de Archivos y Bibliotecas 1958.

(6) John L. Phelan

(7) Shelby T. McCloy "The Negro in the French West Indies" University of Kentucky Press, 1966 (no place of Publication) p. vii.

(8) Cornelis Ch. Goslinga "The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast 1580-1680" Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1971

(9) Dr. M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz "A Survey of Archives in the Netherlands pertaining to the History of the Netherlands Antilles" De West-Indische Gids, Vol. XXXV, 1954-5. and "Archieven betreffende de Nederlandse kolonien Essequibo, Demerary en Berbice in het Public Record Office te London" De Nieuwe West-Indische Gids, 1961. pp. 127-149.

(10) M.P.H. Poessingh, "Guide to the Sources in the Netherlands for the history of Latin America" The Hague: Government Publishing Office, 1968.

(11) Johanna Felhoen Kraal "Libraries and Archives for Research in the West Indian History" De West-Indische Gids, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, Dec. 1956.

(12) Magnus Morner "Guía de Fuentes para la Historia de Ibero-América en Escandinavia" Estocolmo, UNESCO, 1968 and "Sources to the History of Latin American in the Danish National Archives" Ibid.

(13) Thomas Mathews "Two Lesser Known Archives containing Material related to the Caribbean Area" Caribbean Studies, Vol. I, No. 4.

(14) Ernst Ekman, "St. Barthélemy and the French Revolution" Caribbean Studies Vol. 3, No. 4.

(15) List of the File of Mocrocopies of the National Archives, Washington: 1950. Publications 51-55.

(16) Kennth Munden, "List of Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs relating to the Dominican Customs Receivership 1905-1940" Washington: National Archives, 1943.

(17) Barry Reckford "Does Fidel Eat More than your Father" London: 1971.

(18) Carmelo Mesa-Lago "Availability and Reliability of Statistics in Socialist Cuba" Latin American Research Review, Vol. IV No. 1 & 2, 1969.

(19) Cuban Studies Newsletter Vol. 1, No. 2, May 1971. University of Pittsburgh.

(20) Ligia Espinal de Hoetink and Enid Baa "Library and Bibliographic Activities in the Dominican Republic" Washington: Pan American Union, 1965 in the publication of the Ninth Seminar on Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials.

(21) Howard Wiarda "Politica y Gobierno en la Republica Dominicana" Santiago: Universidad Madre y Maestra, 1968.

(21A) See the excellent comments and criticism of Professor Carmelo Delgado Cintrón "Crisis de las Colecciones Puertorriqueñas" y el artículo de Dr. Morales Carrión: "Reflexiones sobre la Biblioteca en Puerto Rico"

(22) Lino Gómez Canedo, "Los Archivos Históricos de Puerto Rico" San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1965.

(23) Luis Rodríguez Morales, "El Archivo General de Puerto Rico " San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña.

(24) Isaac S. And Suzanne A. Emmanuel "History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles" Vol. I & II Cincinnati, American Jewish Archives, 1970. See particularly the extensive Bibliography in Vol. II.

(25) Jean Morel, "Los Recursos Bibliotecarios en las Antillas Francesas" Documento de Trabajo presentado en la Primera Conferencia de ACURIL, 1969

(26) J. P. Jardel, M. Nicolas, Cl. Relouzat, "Bibliographie de la Martinique", Les Cahiers du CERAG, núm. esp. 3e Trimestre, 1969.

(27) Pierre Chanover, "Martinique and Guadeloupe: a check list of modern literature" Bulletin of the New York Public Library, October, 1970, pp. 145-195.